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FOR WHA/MEX AND ECA/PE/V/R/W

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SUBJECT: EMILIO TAKES CHARGE: JALISCO GETS THIRD SUCCESSIVE PAN GOVERNOR

REF: GUADALAJARA 0024

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11. Summary: Former Guadalajara Mayor Emilio Gonzalez Marquez assumed the Governorship of Jalisco March 1, calling upon his constituents to "think big" and work together to make the state a leader in business, education, social services, and environmental protection. He also promised to put greater emphasis on human rights and transparency in government. His warm and open manner has earned him greater public support than his predecessor, Francisco Ramirez Acuna (now Interior Minister) enjoyed. "Emilio" (as he is almost universally called) and three members of his cabinet have participated in US Voluntary Visitor programs, and the Consulate enjoys an excellent working relationship with him and his team. End Summary.

The Long Wait Is Over:

12. Emilio Gonzalez's March 1 inauguration was the culmination of an extraordinarily long transition period from his narrow July 2, 2006 election victory. This awkward eight month gap, a quirk of Jalisco's electoral calendar, was made somewhat easier when outgoing Governor Francisco Ramirez Acuna and his predecessor, Alberto Cardenas, both received federal Cabinet posts in late November. The absence of these two prominent power-brokers from the daily scene afforded Gonzalez Marquez more breathing space to begin establishing his own authority. Nevertheless, both former governors are keeping their hands in Jalisco politics, and Emilio was careful to include representatives of each in his new cabinet.

13. Undoubtedly the most anxious moments of the transition were the last 24 hours, when the patio of the Legislative Palace was filled with tents of opposition party legislators protesting the allocation of committee assignments by the PAN Congressional leadership. Thirty minutes prior to the start of the inauguration ceremony, the tents were removed in a gesture of goodwill toward the incoming governor, and the event proceeded smoothly.

Thinking Big

14. In his inaugural speech, Gonzalez Marquez called on all sectors of society to form a "Grand Alliance for Jalisco" and to "think big" to make the state a leader in generating more and better jobs, strengthening public security, and improving the overall quality of life. As part of this effort, he promised to work to eliminate hunger, illiteracy, and domestic violence, and fortify the state's environmental protection efforts. The new Governor also pledged to make Jalisco's government the most transparent in Mexico, and to avoid the abuse of power - two subjects on which his predecessor received much criticism

(reftel). In a gesture of conciliation, he also paid tribute to opposition political leaders, including his PRI opponent in the gubernatorial race, Arturo Zamora. Public and media reaction to his remarks was highly favorable.

¶5. Some other "big thoughts" were also circulating in the press at the same time, namely speculation over Emilio's presidential prospects in 2012. He would be in his last year as governor then, and several mega-projects including the Pan American Games and the opening of Guadalajara's branch of the Guggenheim Museum are scheduled for 2011. The prestige of these events, combined with a successful gubernatorial term, could make Gonzalez Marquez an attractive candidate for the PAN's presidential nomination. This possibility was probably not lost on several members of the august audience present for Emilio's inauguration; both Francisco Ramirez Acuna and Alberto Cardenas are said to have presidential aspirations, and the ambitious PAN governor of Aguascalientes, Luis Reynoso Femat, may also be eyeing higher office.

A Kinder, Gentler Governor

¶6. Emilio's warm and open public demeanor contrasts markedly with the somewhat imperious and aloof bearing of his predecessor, and is an important political asset. Immediately after the ceremony, he stopped to chat briefly with members of the small group of protesters that had gathered outside. Later that day, he shed his coat and tie and climbed into an excavator digging trenches for a drainage project in a poor area of the city to emphasize his commitment to infrastructure development. His flair for showmanship was established early in his political career; on his first day as Guadalajara mayor, for example, he donned a police uniform and rode in a patrol car to underline his concern for public security. These events not only produce great photo ops, they also forge a personal bond with the citizenry and help cement his popularity.

Comment: A Good Start:

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¶7. The Consulate has an excellent working relationship with Emilio and members of his cabinet. The new Governor, along with his Secretaries of Culture, Environment, and Finance have participated in US Voluntary Visitor programs and are favorably disposed toward the United States. His Secretary of Public Security, Luis Carlos Najera, has a long-standing history of close collaboration with DEA and other US law enforcement agencies. Emilio himself pledged complete cooperation on counternarcotics efforts when he met DEA Administrator Karen Tandy in February. He has also signaled a willingness to pursue vigorously issues such as oral trials, greater transparency in government, and administrative reform that languished under his predecessor. Jalisco's innate conservatism, rough politics, and creaky bureaucracy will be formidable obstacles, but we will take him at his word and press forward on all of these fronts.
RAMOTOWSKI